

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Representatives Harry Teague, Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján sent a [letter](#) to Speaker Nancy Pelosi today urging her to consider legislation to finalize the *Cobell v. Salazar* settlement, a long-running class-action lawsuit regarding the federal government's trust management and accounting of over 300,000 individual American Indian trust accounts. The *Cobell* suit alleged that the federal government, in its role as trustee, failed to pay billions of dollars in royalties to Indians who own land or mineral rights. On December 8, 2009, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced a settlement in the case that would pay \$1.4 billion to Individual Indian Money account holders and set up a \$2 billion fund to buy back fractionated land for Indian tribes.

“The mismanagement of these funds has long been a dark cloud in our nation’s history. I applaud the Department of Interior for settling this case. Now, it is Congress’ turn to act so that the many members of tribes and pueblos across the nation can begin to receive the payments that they were promised and are entitled to. I urge congressional leadership to make this issue a top priority.” said **Representative Harry Teague** whose congressional district includes the Pueblos of Acoma, Isleta, Laguna, and Zuni, as well as the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and the Navajo Nation Chapters of Alamo, Ramah, and To’hajiilee.”

“This settlement begins to bring justice to Native families that have long been shortchanged, and invests in the future of Indian Country by returning fractionated land to tribal control and creating an Indian Education scholarship fund,” said **Representative Martin Heinrich**. “I commend President Obama and Secretary Salazar for upholding our nation’s trust responsibility to Native Americans and I urge Congress to act quickly to finalize this settlement.”

“The *Cobell v. Salazar* settlement agreement will correct a long-standing injustice against the Indian people,” said **Representative Ben Ray Luján**. “Restoring mineral rights to their rightful owners and correcting past payments will fulfill a federal responsibility and help many who have borne this injustice for too long.”

For the settlement to become final, Congress must pass legislation to approve it.

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[Click here for the full text of the letter \[PDF\].](#)

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